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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: NATIONALIST PARTY SEEKS A SLOVAKIA FOR SLOVAKS IN
UPCOMING ELECTIONS

REF: A. BRATISLAVA 417

[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 404
[1](#)C. BRATISLAVA 382

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for Reasons
1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS), which enjoys 10 to 11 percent support in recent polls, is expected to return to Parliament after a four year absence following June 17 parliamentary elections. SNS is infamous for its ethnocentric, often racist, rhetoric, and the party continues to espouse an anti-foreigner, anti-minority program, which includes rhetoric about cutting aid to minorities and de-emphasizing Slovakia's involvement with international organizations such as NATO and the WTO, and promoting a "national" strategy in the EU. These sentiments were evident in an interview hard-drinking SNS Leader Jan Slota recently gave to the English-language weekly "The Slovak Spectator," in which he blamed "American adventurism" for terrorist attacks in Europe. Unfortunately, only one Slovak political party has definitely ruled out serving in a coalition with SNS. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) BACKGROUND: Poloffs met with SNS spokesman Rafael Rafaj, who is also number 12 on SNS' electoral list, to discuss the party's priorities and plans following the upcoming elections, in which SNS is expected to return to Parliament. The nationalists' failure to gain seats in the 2002 elections was the result of a 2001 split in the party, when current deputy Chairwoman Anna Belousovova (formerly Anna Malikova) forced out the controversial Slota, who responded by forming the Real Slovak Nationalist Party (PSNS). SNS and PSNS gained 3.32 and 3.65 percent, respectively, of valid votes cast in 2002, thus failing to reach the 5 percent threshold needed to win seats in Parliament. The two factions reconciled in 2003 when Slota again became Leader of SNS. (COMMENT. Poloffs have heard from various sources that the animosity between Belousovova and Slota has not diminished despite their public rapprochement. END COMMENT.)

SNS' POST-ELECTION PROGRAM

[1](#)3. (SBU) Although Rafaj acknowledged that SNS has historically been seen as conservative and right-wing, SNS does not consider itself to be rightist, leftist, conservative, or liberal. SNS does not, according to Rafaj, act out of ideology, but rather in the interests of the Slovak nation. While the party's founding principles of conservatism and patriotism remain the same, its pre-election program contains a new element: pragmatism. SNS is focusing on the defense of Slovak national interests, particularly social aspects. Rafaj highlighted privatization as a key topic prior to elections, explaining that privatization had

proceeded too quickly in the past eight years and that some decisions would have to be reviewed. (COMMENT. Rafaj looked uncomfortable when Poloff asked if privatization decisions taken between 1993 and 1998, when SNS was the junior partner of HZDS in Vladimir Meciar's government, could also be reviewed. Rafaj replied that SNS would consider "reopening" any contracts or deals that were unfavorable to Slovakia. END COMMENT.)

14. (SBU) Other SNS priorities include improving housing and completing the east-west highway within the next four years. (COMMENT: Completing the long delayed east-west highway is a goal of every party expected to make it into the next Parliament. END COMMENT.) By improving housing for young families, SNS aims to encourage both family values and the relocation of young families to regions with greater employment prospects. A north-south highway in the east of the country, "from Poland, through Presov and connecting to southern highways" is another priority. (COMMENT: The "southern highway" to which this north-south route would connect could only be the Hungarian M3, although Rafaj clearly preferred not even to voice the name of Slovakia's southern neighbor. END COMMENT.) Rafaj believes the party's new pragmatic approach to social issues will broaden its coalition potential after elections. The only parties with which SNS will definitely not cooperate are SMK (the Party of the Hungarian Coalition) and KSS (the Communist Party of Slovakia).

SNS' PLANS TO RESTRUCTURE GOVERNMENT

15. (SBU) SNS advocates changing some aspects of governmental structure, both externally and internally. SNS would like to reduce the number of Slovakia's regions from the current eight to three plus two independent metropolises of Bratislava and Kosice. (COMMENT. Slovakia moved from a three regions plus Bratislava division to the current eight region format while governed by a HZDS-SNS coalition. END COMMENT.) SNS would also like to combine the Ministry of Education with Culture, and the Ministry of Economy with Construction and Regional Development.

16. (SBU) Interior is the most interesting ministry for SNS if it is able to join the next government and Rafaj said SNS would nominate Slota for the post. The Ministry of Transport is SNS' second preferred ministry.

PARTY CONTINUES ANTI-HUNGARIAN POLITICS

17. (C) A meeting with SNS would not be complete without a discussion of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia (although, surprisingly, Rafaj did not mention SNS' other nemesis, Roma). Rafaj referenced a recent report that found the average size of homes and apartments in the 11 southern-most counties of Slovakia is substantially larger than the average for the rest of the country. SNS interprets this as a sign that the Hungarian South is not be as poor as estimated, and that aid should therefore be diverted to the North and East of Slovakia. (COMMENT: Socio-economic statistics indicate that the predominantly Hungarian regions of southern Slovakia are among the poorest in the country. This comes as a result of several factors, including an agricultural and rural base and the presence of a large Roma population. END COMMENT.) Rafaj also complained about the SMK taking three ministries which together control all Euro-funds in the current government. Rafaj said the SMK had abused this position to "steal" Euro-funds for its ethnic-Hungarian voters. SNS continues to view Hungarian secession as a real threat to Slovakia. Rafaj emphasized the importance of ensuring SMK not be included in the next government.

OPPOSES FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT BUT WOULD UPHOLD POLICIES

18. (SBU) On foreign policy, Rafaj claimed that SNS has

moderated its stance on NATO and EU membership. He noted that SNS shares the same values as the "Union for Europe of the Nations" political group in the European Parliament, with which SNS is associated. (COMMENT: That grouping includes the Polish conservative ruling Party of Law and Justice (PiS) and the Scottish Nationalist Party. END COMMENT.) Rafaj stressed that SNS holds a Euro-realist view, but is against further political integration and the proposed Constitutional Treaty.

Although SNS had initially opposed Slovakia's membership to NATO, Rafaj said that it would not try to leave the treaty now. In fact, SNS would support NATO and EU membership for Ukraine and Serbia. Rafaj first said that SNS does not support missions outside the European theater (i.e. Kosovo), but then corrected himself to say that SNS would support missions sanctioned by the UN Security Council. Above all, SNS advocates closer cooperation of Slavic nations along the lines of the English Commonwealth or the French Francophonie.

¶9. (C) Rafaj was sharply critical of Slovakia's recent military reforms, but seemed to know little about them. (COMMENT: Rafaj spoke about the best way to utilize Slovakia's small force of 27,000. According to January figures from the MoD, Slovakia has 17,017 uniformed soldiers. END COMMENT.) With reference to a demonstration of the C-130J-30 that DefMin Fedor had attended the previous day, Rafaj also questioned Slovakia's need for military aircraft that can travel 5,000 km when the country itself is merely 600 km long. He said Slovakia should first invest in fighter aircraft to protect its own territory since Slovakia would be no good to NATO if it could not even defend its own territory. Rafaj also criticized Slovakia's recent donation of 500,000,000 SKK (1,700,000 USD) worth of excess military supplies to Afghanistan as a betrayal of the nation when money cannot even be found to provide basic protections against biochemical terrorist attacks such as a gas mask for every citizen. (COMMENT: NATO has urged Slovakia and other new members to purchase medium range cargo aircraft and has discouraged the purchase of new fighters. The military equipment donated to Afghanistan was outdated, unused material from Slovak stockpiles that was costing more to store than it did to donate. Poloff was left feeling that being a fascist must require an extraordinary amount of brain-power given that it leaves so little left-over for getting facts straight. END COMMENT.)

SLOTA ON ROMA, HUNGARIANS, AND "AMERICAN ADVENTURISM"

¶10. (U) An interview with SNS chairman Jan Slota was published in Slovakia's English-language journal Spectator the week of May 22, and highlighted the leader's racist attitudes towards Hungarians and Roma, his disdain for international politics, and his love of the bottle. Slota was confident that SNS would win at least 12 percent of the vote on the June 17 elections, and went so far as to say that "most Slovaks are like (him)" in that they agree with his

extreme views. He called the leaders and intellectuals who oppose him "scum," and said that he believes LS-HZDS leader and former coalition partner Vladimir Meciar should withdraw from Slovak politics.

¶11. (U) Slota made many of his usual ethnocentric arguments against the Hungarian and Roma minorities in Slovakia, claiming that these two groups were his "problem" and the problem of SNS. He labeled the high birth rate of the Roma population as "dangerous" for Slovakia, and compared it to the growth of the Albanian minority in Kosovo. As a result, the ancestors of the "thousands of Serbs who fell before the gates of European culture and European Christianity," are being denied there home. Slota attacked Islam, blaming Muslim fundamentalists for events in Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, and France. The SNS Leader argued that last years conflicts in France and the bombings in London were a "result of the fact that the policy of the European Union was so receptive to American adventurism."

¶12. (U) In reference to foreign policy, Slota took an almost

condescending attitude. He regarded Slovakia's entry into NATO as a product of the "adventurism of the United States," which itself was "counter-productive." In fact, Slota said that if SNS was part of the next GOS, its ministers would demand the withdrawal of Slovak troops from Iraq by the end of 2006 at the latest. EU involvement was also problematic for Slota; he mentioned that his party was strongly against the closure of the Jaslovske Bohunice nuclear plant, the closure of which is a condition set out in the ratified treaty of accession. Slota claimed to have no interest in changing Slovakia's current foreign policies, and planned to follow the path that the government had taken thus far. Slota vowed not to leave any agreements to which Slovakia belongs, such as NATO, and also discussed his ideal vision for Europe: a "union of strong nation states that would cooperate," rather than one based on a strong federal system.

¶13. (U) SNS holds a rather conservative stance in domestic policies as well, although it is in favor of the flat tax with the exception of basic foodstuffs. Slota's zeal for tradition and homogeneity carry over to Slovak society, where he believes that women have become "emancipated," seeking education and careers in place of families, and thus causing the high divorce rate.

¶14. (C) COMMENT: Slota's outrageous comments appeal to a section of Slovak society which admires his frankness and macho image and thinks that he has helped the town of which he is mayor, Zilina, prosper. His numerous bouts of public drunkenness, one of which was filmed recently, have caused some to question his fitness for office. Although initially several mainstream parties, including Smer and SDKU, rushed to tell us they would not consider including SNS in a coalition, this seems to be changing recently, as parties are striving to keep all options open for after the June 17 election. One prominent SDKU official even noted that Slota with a ministry was not much different than ANO's Pavol Rusko in the last government. Embassy officers behind the scenes have made it known that one of our main goals is promoting tolerance and diversity in Slovak society. The unlikely, but still possible, inclusion of SNS in a future ruling coalition would present an additional challenge to promoting this objective. For the time being, we avoid meeting with him.

VALLEE